

Statement  
of  
IAN T. ALLISON

P. O. Box 1705  
Santa Rosa, CA 95402

on

HR23

Belated Thank You to the Merchant Mariners of World War II Act of 2007

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON VETERANS' AFFAIRS

April 18, 2007

**Thank you, Mr. Chairman and members of the Veterans' Affairs Committee.**

My name is Ian Allison, Co-chairman of the Just Compensation Committee, a non-profit unincorporated association of Merchant Marine Veterans of World War II registered with the Internal Revenue Service. Our 10,800 members have joined together seeking equal treatment for all Veterans of World War II who shared the loss of 20 Million people on this earth who participated voluntarily or otherwise in this great war.

I would like to submit as evidence at this Veterans Affairs Committee hearing on HR23 a famous book entitled "A Careless Word....A Needless Sinking" by Captain Arthur R. Moore. I recognize that at 704 pages, it is too great to become part of the electronic record and acceptance for printing but submit it as an exhibit material to be maintained in the Committee files for review and use by the Committee.

The book accounts for 820 American ships, freighter, tankers, passenger and troop ships lost at sea in World War II. Over 9,000 Merchant Seamen were either killed or lost in action. 12,000 wounded or maimed and 786 prisoners of war taken by the enemy. The majority of these lost souls lay in Davy Jones' locker at the bottom of the sea without markers or tombstones to show their grave sites.

What depraved men branded these gallant mariners we lost at sea, as DRAFT DODGERS? As an Engineer working in the bowels of gasoline tankers plying the waters of the Atlantic and Pacific and facing the German and Japanese U-boats, I've never met a fellow soldier, sailor or Marine who would trade places with me.

I would like to tell you the story of one lost ship that I have picked at random. The same story can be told of 819 other ships with death and destruction the penalties of war.

THE SS JACKSONVILLE, A T-2 TANKER BUILT AT THE SWAN ISLAND SHIPYARDS BY HENRY KAISER IN PORTLAND, OREGON 1944. AUGUST 30, 1944 A TORPEDO HIT THE SHIP JUST AFT OF THE MIDSHIP HOUSE. FIRE BROKE OUT AND THE 80-OCTANE GAS COVERED THE SHIP STEM TO STERN IN FLAMES. A SECOND EXPLOSION BROKE THE SHIP IN TWO WITH BOTH PARTS STILL BURNING. THE FOREPART SANK QUICKLY, THE STERN SECTION SINKING THE NEXT DAY.

THERE WERE NO LIFEBOATS OR RAFTS LAUNCHED. OUT OF THE 78 MEN ON BOARD, THE ONLY 2 SURVIVORS JUMPED OVERBOARD INTO THE FLAMING WATER AND SWAM AWAY FROM THE SHIP. THEY WERE PICKED UP BY A U. S. DESTROYER ESCORT AND TAKEN TO IRELAND.

FOR THE GRACE OF GOD, THERE GO I. IT COULD HAVE BEEN MY SHIP. I SAILED 3 YEARS DURING THE WAR, IN THE ENGINE ROOM, ON A GASOLINE TANKER BUILT IN PORTLAND OREGON BY HENRY KAISER. I CAME OUT UNSCATHED BUT 9,000 OF MY COMRADES DID NOT.

Why? Why? Why, were the gallant members of the Merchant Marine, who suffered the highest casualty rate of the war, with 1 out of 26 dying, left out of the 1944 G. I. Bill of Rights? Some warped minds were at work to have engineered this travesty. I can only speculate after 60 years of thought and observation.

I have come to the conclusion that in general, these three things stirred up jealousy and animosity about the Merchant Mariners.

1. We had no discrimination in our ranks whereby we accepted Blacks, Hispanics and aliens into our ranks. Some of them became ship's officers on up to the "4 Stripe" rank of Captains and Chief Engineers. None of the other Services were as non-discriminatory as the Merchant Marine. Discrimination was still rampant in America during the War.
2. Merchant Mariners didn't wait to be drafted. We were all volunteers. Both the Japanese and German Navys took their toll of our men both before and after WWII.
3. Our ALL VOLUNTEER crews on U. S. Merchant Marine ships during WWII were union members of one of many union organizations representing unlicensed personnel i.e. Sailors Union of the Pacific (SUP), Seafarers International Union (SIU), Marine Firemen and Watertenders (MFOW), National Maritime Union (NMU), Marine Cooks and Stewards (MCS) and ship officers unions which were Master Mates and Pilots (MM&P) together with Radio Operators and Marine Engineers Beneficial Association (MEBA). None of the other Services in the U. S. Forces had legally incorporated organizations to represent their interests as to pay, transportation, living conditions and more. These were all pre-war organizations which were a great boon and offered efficiency to the war effort.

I am sure that members of this Committee, after intelligent review of the history and facts about World War II, will be convinced of the necessity of passing our House Bill HR23.

I thank you for your time in listening to my testimony given this 18<sup>th</sup> day of April, 2007 and will be glad to answer questions at the appropriate time.